

Lawrence (Larry) Bagneris, Jr.

VITA



Larry Bagneris began his Civil Rights activities at the age of 16 as a student at St. Augustine High School in New Orleans. He took part in pickets in front of Maison Blanche Department Store protesting the Jim Crow policies of the retail giant. He participated in sit-ins at Walgreen's in Gentilly Woods and other New Orleans mainstays such as the Frostop on Canal Street and Woolworth's. He was arrested for his efforts to seek equal treatment for persons of color. More than once, Larry was taken to the Juvenile Center because he was too young to be booked into Central Lockup with the adult population. Larry took part in many mass rallies including a nighttime march from A. L. Davis Park to City Hall. In 1963 he attended the National Conference for International Justice in Memphis, Tennessee with other students and priests from St. Augustine High School. He challenged the Monsignor of the Diocese of New Orleans to explain why Catholic Schools were still segregated. Several years later, when Archbishop Rummel was to receive an honor from the Vatican, Larry led a protest outside the hotel where the accolades were presented. Larry served as President of the Negro Betterment Council of St. Augustine and worked with Chink Henry and the Longshoreman's Union during the Johnson-Humphrey bid for the Presidency. While demonstrating for the Voter Rights Act he was confronted by opposing, angry demonstrators and was taunted with the Confederate Battle flag. In 1967 he was the first Black elected to serve as Vice-chair of the Young Democrats of New Orleans.

As an out gay man, Larry experienced homophobia during a raid at the

Stonewall Inn in New York in 1969. It was perhaps this incident that altered his course in the Civil Rights movement from emphasis on the rights of racial minorities to that of the gay community. It was also during this time that Larry worked as a volunteer for the first Annual

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Women's Conference in Houston, TX. He was a member of the Board of Directors organized to 'Stop the Briggs Initiative' in California aimed at firing gay teachers. He served on the Board of the first and second March on Washington, D.C. for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Larry was a two term president of the Gay Political Caucus of Houston and was the chairperson of Gay Pride Week. He was the founder of the Gay Pride Parade. He served on the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Larry was the first openly gay person elected as a delegate to the National Democratic Convention in NYC in 1980. The 1990's found Larry immersed in the confusion, turmoil and grief as the Gay community responded to HIV/AIDS. After accepting a job as a lobbyist for New Orleans: N. O. AIDS Task Force, Larry organized a network to meet with every Senator and member of the House of Representatives in Louisiana seeking to educate and illuminate political leaders and the public about HIV/AIDS.

Larry enjoyed a highly successful career in insurance and investments and is now the head of the Human Relations Commission. He is responsible for receiving and mediating complaints of discrimination in Housing, Public Accommodations and Employment for the city of New Orleans, LA. Most recently Larry was elected to the Board of Directors of the International Conference for Gay and Lesbian Elected Officials. He has secured New Orleans, LA as the meeting place for the International Conference.

In addition to his political activism, Larry founded the Christmas Joy and Toy Giving Program for the children of the B. W. Cooper and St. Thomas Housing Developments. (For twelve years this project donated clothing, toys and school supplies to those in need).

He is one of four children of the late Mr. Lawrence G. Bagneris, Sr. and

the late Mrs. Gloria (Diaz) Bagneris. As a resident of the French Quarter, he as been a long time member of the Vieux Carre Residential and Business Association and President of the Chateau Dauphine Homeowners' Association. He has sought the office of Representative to P. 3 Bagneris cont'd:

the House of Representatives on three occasions. He serves on the Mayor's Advisory Council for GLBT Issues and is a Board member of N. O. Alliance of PRIDE. Larry received the Human Rights Campaign Award. He has been named liaison to the New Orleans City Council. Recently he was awarded the Forum for Equality Public Service Award and the Ben Smith Award for Lifetime Achievement by the ACLU. Mr. Bagneris is the Founder and President of the Rainbow Flag Project that identifies a 'Boulevard' of flags down Rampart Street, the entrance to the French Quarter or Vieux Carre. This highly symbolic mode displays for all to see the prosperity and the diversity of the GLBT community in New Orleans.